

FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA, LEHIGH AVENUE BRANCH  
(Free Library of Philadelphia, Lillian Marrero Branch)  
601 West Lehigh Avenue  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia  
Pennsylvania

HABS PA-6756  
*PA-6756*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA, LEHIGH AVE BRANCH (Free Library of Philadelphia, Lillian Marrero Branch)

HABS NO. PA-6756

Location: 601 West Lehigh Avenue at Sixth Street, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania. The library faces south on the broad West Lehigh Avenue, and is part of a cluster of municipal buildings, including a water pumping station to the west side and a fire house to the north rear.

Owner: The library is part of the Free Library of Philadelphia system and is owned by the City of Philadelphia.

Present Use: Branch library

Significance: Completed in 1906, the Lehigh Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia was one of the first of twenty-five branch libraries built through an endowment from industrialist-turned-philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. The impact of Carnegie's grant program on the development of public libraries cannot be overstated. He came of age in an era when libraries were rare, privately funded institutions and access was through subscription. Believing in the power of libraries to create an egalitarian society that favored hard work over social privilege by allowing equal access to knowledge, between 1886 and 1917 he provided forty million dollars for the construction of 1,679 libraries throughout the nation. The vast resources that he allotted to library research and construction contributed significantly to the development of the American Library as a building type. In addition, by insisting that municipalities supply a building site, books, and annual maintenance funds before bestowing grants Carnegie elevated libraries from the arena of private philanthropy to that of civic responsibility.

Philadelphia was the recipient of one of the largest Carnegie grants for library construction. Although the city was among the first to establish a free library system, it had no purpose-built structures prior to the Carnegie endowment. The branch libraries were built between 1905 and 1930, under the direction of the city appointed Carnegie Fund Committee, and designed by a "who's-who" of Philadelphia's architects. The twenty extant branch libraries remain as a remarkable intact and cohesive grouping, rivaled only by that of New York City, with fifty-seven.<sup>1</sup> The Lehigh Branch was designed by the well-known Philadelphia architectural firm of Hewitt & Hewitt. It is among the most

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<sup>1</sup> Carnegie provided funding beginning in 1903 for thirty branch libraries, but with rising construction costs, only twenty-five could be built. Of Philadelphia's twenty-five libraries, four are no longer extant and a fifth (Frankford) has been greatly altered. Four others are no longer used as library buildings. In New York, fifty-seven were still standing, and fifty-four still operating as libraries as of the 1996 publication of *The Architecture of Literacy; The Carnegie Libraries of New York City* by Mary B. Dierickx. The next single largest grants for branch libraries were given to Cleveland (15), Baltimore (14), and Cincinnati (10).

elaborate of the branch libraries, and at 126' x 60', it is also the largest. While its overall plan and design is quintessential Carnegie library, its size, terra cotta facade, and level of detailing set it apart from most of the Free Library's more understated brick-constructed branch buildings. The lot was provided by the city of Philadelphia in recognition of the need to serve the growing, largely immigrant community then populating this area of the city.

Historian: Catherine C. Lavoie

## PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

### A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The Lehigh Branch Library was erected between 1905 and 1906, although the contract for the design of the building was awarded in October 1904.<sup>2</sup> The cornerstone was laid 10 April 1905.<sup>3</sup> The ceremonial opening of the library was held on 20 November 1906.<sup>4</sup>

2. Architect: The design of the Lehigh Branch Library was undertaken by the architectural firm of Hewitt & Hewitt, George Watson Hewitt (1841-1916) and his younger brother, William D. Hewitt (1847-1924), principals. Both were born in Burlington, New Jersey, not far from Philadelphia, and both attended Burlington College. Before establishing his own firm in 1875, G.W. Hewitt worked with a number of well-known Philadelphia architects such as Joseph C. Hoxie, John Notman, and Frank Furness. With John Notman, the elder Hewitt gained considerable knowledge in the design of English-styled ecclesiastic architecture. Working with Frank Furness from 1867 to 1871, G.W. Hewitt was involved in the design of the well known Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Hewitt added his younger brother William D. Hewitt to the firm in 1878. W.D. Hewitt also received a degree in mechanical engineering from the Polytechnic Institute of Philadelphia in 1865. He immediately enlisted in the Civil War and then spent six months in Europe before joining his brother's architectural firm, then known as Fraser, Furness & Hewitt. G.W. Hewitt retired in 1907, at which time junior members of Hewitt & Hewitt joined to form the firm of Hewitt, Stevens & Paist. W.D. Hewitt formed various other partnerships over the years, working until his death in 1924 at age seventy-six.

The Hewitt brother's design specialties included large estate-style private residences, churches, and commercial and hospital buildings.<sup>5</sup> Much of their design work reflects their interest in English and Scottish architectural forms. Among their better known

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<sup>2</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee, Minutes, 11 October 1904.

<sup>3</sup> "Corner-Stone For Carnegie Library," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 April 1905, 2.

<sup>4</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, *Eleventh Annual Report of the Library Board*, 1906, 25.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Carnegie Fund Committee, Minutes, October 11, 1904.

designs is the *Drum Moir* residence of Henry H. Houston, director of the Pennsylvania Railroad in Chestnut Hill. When Houston decided to develop his Chestnut Hill estate as an upper class suburb in the 1880s, the Hewitts undertook the planning for the community and designed a number of its principal buildings. These included the Wissahickon Inn (Chestnut Hill Academy), the first clubhouse for the Philadelphia Cricket Club, and St. Martin-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church. The Hewitts also designed a number of residences in the community. Other structures for which the Hewitts are known include the Philadelphia Bourse, Hahneman Medical College and Dispensary, and the Bellevue Stratford Hotel.<sup>6</sup>

3. Owners: The library is part of the Free Library of Philadelphia system and is owned by the City of Philadelphia. The land for the library was provided by the city, and included three other municipal buildings, a pumping station and a firehouse, as well as a heating plant that was shared by the three structures.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The contract for the construction of the Lehigh Branch was awarded to low-bidder, Henderson and Company for \$89,887. The heating contract was estimated at \$10,000 and included a larger heating plant to service the library as well as the adjacent city pump house and firehouse buildings. The contract for the terra cotta exterior finish and architectural details was awarded to William R. Dougherty at a cost of \$49,000. The cost for furniture, fittings, etc. was set at \$17,618.

5. Original plans and construction: Still extant copies of the original drawings and historic photographs taken upon completion indicate that the building remains largely as planned. The plan consisted of a large open reading room on the first floor measuring on the interior 119' x 53' and separated into sections by low book cases. A circulation desk and entrance gates were apparent upon entry, and the room was furnished with library tables and chairs in both the Craftsmen and Colonial Revival/Windsor style. Shelving lined the walls on all sides. Above the built-in shelving, ornamental pilasters separate the windows that appear in the upper portion of the wall (elevated to allow for the shelving). The ceiling was coffered and featured ornamental plaster and a large central skylight (still extant). Brass chandeliers hung in a row, running through the center down the length of the building. Flanking the main entry vestibule was a spiral stairway to the basement (likely for librarian use only) and a "w.c." (water closet or restroom).

Also according to the original plans, the basement was designed to contain a large auditorium measuring 72' x 52' and was located to the southeastern end of the building. The auditorium was entered via a wide exterior stairway to the side of the building, through a long vestibule flanked by a cloak room to the east and a restroom to the south. At the opposing end of the auditorium was a large stage, flanked by ante rooms. A long corridor behind the stage area provided access to librarians' service areas, including a

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<sup>6</sup> Roger Moss and Sandra Tatman, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, 1700-1930* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Company, 1985), 367-377. Also, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G.\\_W.\\_&\\_W.\\_D.\\_Hewitt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G._W._&_W._D._Hewitt).

kitchen, pantry, dining room, restrooms and storeroom; and to the fan and boiler rooms. Below the front entryway was located a storeroom, with a men's toilet to one side and the spiral stairway to the main level on the other.

6. Alterations and additions: The main reading room remains largely intact although areas have been partitioned to create meeting rooms and work rooms for the library staff. The pilasters, coffered ceiling, skylight and even the light fixtures remain in place, although the skylight has been covered from the exterior so that natural light no longer filters through. The walls between the pilasters are now painted peach, and the woodwork an ivory color. The original furnishings have been replaced, as has the circulation desk, although its position near the front entry remains constant. An elevator has been added to the rear of the building for handicapped access. The basement (which was inaccessible) is now used as offices for the city government.

Rehabilitations undertaken in 1967-68 by architect George C. Neff and contractor E. Clifford Durell & Son, Inc. included all new systems—electric service and wiring, heating, roof and gutters, the rehabilitation of existing plumbing, and the addition of new public and staff rest rooms. The exterior walls were cleaned and repointed and new aluminum entrance doors were installed. In the main reading room, the old light fixtures were refurbished and re-hung and supplemented with new lighting installed in the ceiling. A new stair to the basement replaced the spiral stairway. Walls, ceilings, and shelving were painted and vinyl asbestos tiles were laid on the floor (tile in the rest rooms). The new furniture was also added at this time. In the basement, the auditorium was converted for reuse and the kitchen was modernized. Walls were repaired and painted and vinyl tile flooring applied. Around the perimeter of the library, new shrubs and planting were added, walkways repaired, and metal fencing and gates installed.<sup>7</sup> These renovations were evidently not intended for use by library patrons, however, and must have marked the beginning of its use as city offices. A letter from Ernest W. Lee, President of the Lehigh Civil Association to Mayor James Tate, dated 16 January 1968, and on file at the library, expresses his regret that following the renovations to the auditorium it will no longer be available to the community.

## B. Historical Context:

### **The Carnegie Funded Free Library of Philadelphia Building Campaign**

On 3 January 1903, Carnegie's secretary James Bertram responded to the Free Library of Philadelphia's request for a grant to finance the construction of libraries with the promise of \$1.5 million for a planned thirty branch libraries. Despite the fact that Philadelphia figures quite prominently on the timeline of American Library history, it had no purpose-built public libraries prior to the Carnegie endowment. Philadelphia *did* have the nation's first private subscription

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<sup>7</sup> "Final Construction Report, Rehabilitation of Library Building" Free Library of Philadelphia, Leigh Ave. Branch, 1968, on file at the library.

library, known as the Library Company, founded in 1731. Numerous other private libraries were created as well, such as the Mercantile Library, Ridgeway Library, and the library at the University of Pennsylvania. And it was in Philadelphia that the American Library Association was formed in 1876. The establishment of the Free Library in 1891 placed Philadelphia among the first American cities to institute a non-subscription public library system for the benefit of all of Philadelphia's citizens. As Library Board president J.G. Rosengarten stated in 1903, "Proprietary libraries have grown into valuable adjuncts to our other education institutions. None of them, however, serves the public as does the Free Library, providing good reading for our school children, for our industrious adult population, and for the city's useful employees, firemen, and telegraph operators."<sup>8</sup> As Rosengarten's comment indicates, the library system was an important component of the city's public education.

However, prior to the Carnegie funding, the city's fourteen branch libraries, each started by interested local communities, were dependent upon old mansions, storefronts, or back rooms of commercial buildings and civic institutions for library space. As Rosengarten points out, "The [Carnegie] gift gave welcome relief from the expense of the rented rooms occupied by the branches, and from much of the risk to which the collections were subjected in these temporary quarters."<sup>9</sup> Likewise, prior to the completion of its permanent home in 1927, the Central Branch of the Free Library was housed within three different preexisting buildings, including City Hall, an abandoned concert hall on Chestnut Street, and a building at the northeast corner of 13<sup>th</sup> and Locust streets. Carnegie's \$1.5 million grant would change all that. Beginning in 1905, the endowment was used for the design and construction of twenty-five branch libraries throughout the city (three of which are no longer extant). They were built between 1905 and 1930, with the bulk of them constructed by 1917, and designed by a wide range of Philadelphia architects.

Philadelphia was just one of many cities to receive a library grant. Andrew Carnegie provided forty million dollars for the construction of over 1,600 libraries throughout the United States during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (and about 400 more abroad). Carnegie was motivated by both his own immigrant experience and by his social/political beliefs. Despite his poor, working-class upbringing, he made a fortune through the production of steel. Believing that the wealthy were obligated to give back to society, Carnegie set out to spend during his lifetime the entire 400 million dollars that he received through the sale of Carnegie Steel Company. Carnegie also believed that given a good work ethic and the proper tools, anyone could be successful. He was self-taught and credited his success to the access he received to one gentleman's private library. Carnegie came to believe in the power of libraries to create an egalitarian society that favored hard work over social privilege. Hence libraries, as a key to learning and socialization, became a focus of his charitable donations.

While Carnegie's motivations were in large part paternalistic, the impact of his library campaign is far greater than merely providing the working class with access to books. The vast resources that he applied to this area lead to great advances in library science as well as to the development

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<sup>8</sup> Theodore Wesley Koch, *A Book of Carnegie Libraries* (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1917), 85.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

of the American Library as a building type. Carnegie applied the corporate business models that had made him successful as an industrialist to the development and production of libraries. He insured that local municipalities had a stake in their libraries by insisting that they supply the building site and the books, as well as ten percent of the total construction cost annually for maintenance. By so doing, Carnegie took libraries from the arena of private philanthropy to that of civic responsibility. Any town that was willing to meet those terms was basically able to receive grant funding. The process began via a letter of application submitted to Andrew Carnegie's personal secretary and the individual charged with management of the library grants, James Bertram. The city of Philadelphia did just that.

Unlike its rival New York City, Philadelphia's planning group, the Carnegie Fund Committee, placed librarians and not architects at the forefront of the planning process. This is likely the primary reason for the relative standardization of Philadelphia's branch libraries, particularly with regard to layout. This important decision on the part of the Library Board was in keeping with the sentiments endorsed by the Carnegie Corporation. James Bertram was generally distrustful of architects as library planners, believing that they tended to make libraries too expensive by adding unusable space and superfluous detail merely for affect. He preferred the advice of librarians who better understood how libraries needed to function. Both the Philadelphia Library Board and Carnegie Fund Committee included well-placed librarians, the former being the Pennsylvania State Librarian and American Library Association representative Thomas L. Montgomery, and the latter the Free Library's John Thomson. President of the Board of Education Henry R. Edmunds was also on the Committee, an indication of the significance of the libraries to public education in Philadelphia. Prominent local businessmen and attorneys filled the other positions. As the Committee minutes indicate, the Librarian and Assistant Librarian were left to work out the details with the architects, and generally had the last say when it came to finalizing the plans.<sup>10</sup> (For more information about the Carnegie Library construction program and the Free Library of Philadelphia's own library building campaign see, Free Library of Philadelphia, Central Branch, HABS No. PA-6749, Historical Context section.)

### **The Lehigh Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia**

The Lehigh Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia was the third of twenty-five branch libraries to be completed. As indicated by an article appearing in the *Philadelphia Press* in April 1905 entitled, "Cornerstone Laid for Library Branch," the Lehigh Branch was actually the first of the planned thirty branches to begin construction. The article also reported that Lehigh was to be the "largest and finest of the thirty" measuring 119' x 53' (on the interior) and costing \$110,000. According to the April article, construction had begun two months prior on the "semi-classical

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<sup>10</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, Board of Trustees, Minutes, 1 July 1904. "On motion resolved, that the matter of procuring plans and securing bids be referred to the Carnegie Fund Committee with power." And also, Carnegie Fund Committee, Minutes, 17 May 1912. An entry from this meeting (one of many) illustrates that practices: "Mr. Richards [architect] be instructed to prepare plans for the proposed new Paschalville Branch and that the President be authorized to approve plans for such Branch when same were agreed upon by himself, the Librarian, Asst. Librarian and the architect."

style” structure which was being erected of terra cotta and granite. The first floor (basement) was to contain a lecture hall, a feature claimed to be “an innovation in the buildings of libraries” included at the request of Andrew Carnegie and the Carnegie Corporation. A lecture hall was, in fact, a key component of the Philadelphia Carnegie libraries as well as those built nationwide. Entrance to the lecture hall was located on the Sixth Street (side) elevation. The second or main floor was to house “the library and two divisions” to include the reference and children’s rooms separated by low bookcases. An opening was planned for the fall. According to an article in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* regarding the plans for the library:

Granite steps will lead into the building on Lehigh Avenue. There will be staircases on either side of the spacious hall leading to the second floor. A large auditorium, with a completely equipped stage, is provided for in the basement, on one side of a corridor, while on the other a dining room, Kitchen, pantry, toilet rooms, store rooms and ante-rooms will be fitted up. The library will be located on the first floor. The ceiling will be a handsome one of ornamental plaster, with wire glass panels. The most modern equipment in the shape of heating and ventilating apparatus and electric lighting will be introduced. Hard woods will be used extensively.<sup>11</sup>

The article also claimed that the architect had already been selected, and that a building in “the Grecian style” was planned. Construction bids would allow for alternative plans for the facades of the library to be of either Indiana limestone or Pennsylvania white marble. The roof was to include a skylight and be covered in green slate.

The architectural firm of Hewitt & Hewitt was approached in summer 1904, as indicated by a notation on 14 July in the minutes of the Carnegie Fund Committee. As noted, the Committee “approves architects’ [Messer. Hewitts’] suggestion to “obtain a preliminary bid upon the plans before proceeding to the expense of preparing detailed drawings and specifications so that modifications might be considered before that expense is incurred if the cost of the proposed building should prove more than was anticipated.”<sup>12</sup> A debate took place regarding the placement of the windows to the front of the building, which the Committee suggested should be “brought down as low as the heating apparatus would permit” or “on a line with the base of the arch of the main door.”<sup>13</sup> The implication is that the front windows be as large as possible to maximize on natural light while still accommodating the book stacks that line the walls. The debate is worth noting since the elevated placement of windows in libraries became a standard feature. Although cutting down on natural light, and possibly on the aesthetic appeal of the libraries, this placement allowed for the maximum book storage. Another question that arose was with regard to the heating. The intent was that the “most modern equipment” be used for the “heating and ventilating apparatus and electric lighting.”<sup>14</sup> The architect met with Board of Education architect Cook, and determined that due to the proximity of other municipal structures on site, including the Northeast Manual Training School, the recommendation was made to create a central plant that allowed for cost savings. The end result of the deliberations was the

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<sup>11</sup> “Will Bid Upon Two Carnegie Branches,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 1 October 1904.

<sup>12</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee, Minutes, 14 July 1904.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. 9 July 1904. Interestingly, a substantial space remains between the window sill and the top of the stacks.

<sup>14</sup> “Plans for First Carnegie Library,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 September 1904, 9.



standardization of procedures as outlined in a “Memorandum of instruction to architects to be followed by them in all Branch Library Buildings” that included the use of ducts hidden within the book stacks that became a standard design feature.

The deadline for submitting proposals for construction was set for 3 October. According to the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, “Competition is keen for the contract to build the structure, and some of the most prominent builders in the city have fallen over each other in their efforts to get plans in order to submit bids for the work, which will cost in the neighborhood of \$100,000.”<sup>15</sup> By early October a construction contract was approved for Henderson & Company who, at a cost of \$89,887, presented the lowest bid. The heating costs were estimated at \$10,000 and the furniture, fittings, etc. at \$17,618.<sup>16</sup> The architect was asked on 28 October to prepare a contract with the builder to be signed by the chair of committee. The Annual Report of the Library Board, issued in April 1905, made the following statement with regard to the Lehigh Avenue Branch, “messrs. G.W. and W.D. Hewitt were appointed architects . . . and their plans have been approved, the contract awarded to messrs. Henderson & Company, Ltd. The building is making progress and the cornerstone was laid . . . on Monday April 10, 1905. It is hoped that this building will be opened before the end of 1905.”<sup>17</sup> The site for the library was on a portion of the old Fairhill Reservoir, which also included a site for the Northeast Manual Training School, then under construction by the same contractor.<sup>18</sup> As planned, the cornerstone was laid without formal ceremony on the afternoon of 10 April 1905. The event marked the first laying of the cornerstone for the Carnegie branch libraries of Philadelphia, and was overseen by the President and the Librarian of the Free Library, Joseph G. Rosengarten and John Thomson (respectively), both of whom made brief addresses. Also in attendance were various city councilmen, State Librarian Thomas L. Montgomery, and members of the Carnegie Committee, including Henry R. Edmonds (also President of the School Board) who made a brief address.<sup>19</sup>

By June the Committee looked hopefully towards a grand opening in mid-October. Four branch libraries were under construction concurrently and it appeared that it would be a close race as to which one would be the first to open. As the April report also indicated, “The four new buildings in [the] course of erection at 40<sup>th</sup> and Walnut Sts, Lehigh Ave and 6<sup>th</sup> St, [at] Frankford, and at Tacony are rapidly nearing completion.” The opening of the Lehigh Branch actually took place on 16 November 1906, making this the third branch library to open (following West Philadelphia on 26 June and Frankford on 2 October). Architect W.D. Hewitt was in attendance to speak at the ceremony on topics relating to the construction, to account for expenditures, and to ceremoniously hand over the keys to the librarian.<sup>20</sup> Reportedly, the Children’s Room was to be open for evening hours for the offspring of nearby factory workers.

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee, Minutes, 11 October 1904.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., *Ninth Annual Report, 1905*, April entries.

<sup>18</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 21 September 1904, 9.

<sup>19</sup> Corner-Stone for Carnegie Library; Formal Ceremony Dispensed With, But Prominent Men Made Addresses at Sixth and Lehigh” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 April 1904, 2.

<sup>20</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee, Minutes, 16 November 1906.

The accommodations made for local children proved to be a valuable component of all the branch libraries.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Lehigh Branch library is a large and fairly ornate structure exhibiting the classical detailing indicative of the Beaux Arts style. It is also of note for its use of terra cotta. As was typical of Carnegie-funded libraries, the building rests on a high basement that houses a lecture hall, and consists of a rectangular structure with bands of windows placed high on the façade to accommodate the built-in bookshelves that line the interior walls. This is the largest of the Free Library of Philadelphia's branch libraries, measuring seven bays across and five bays in depth. It is further distinguished by its classical details executed in terra cotta and marble, and its elaborate entry portico.

2. Condition of fabric: The library appears to be well maintained and in good condition.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The Lehigh Branch is a rectangular, two-story structure (basement and first floor) measuring 126' across and 60' in depth, with interior dimensions of 119' x 53'. The building is seven bays across the front (and nine to the rear) and five bays deep. It sits on a raised basement or first floor that is entered from the Sixth Street side of the building. The elevated entrance is reached via a wide, terraced stairway. The front façade is punctuated by a central entry pavilion and by pilasters that appear between the windows.

2. Foundations: The foundations are of limestone.

3. Walls: The walls are of limestone and terra cotta in a coursed ashlar pattern, with light brickwork with solid masonry backing. The foundation and details such as the columns that flank the entry are of marble.

4. Structural systems, framing: The first floor and roof are carried on a steel frame with first floor joists of slow-burning wood members, covered with 3" plank flooring overlaid with maple flooring. The roof framing consists of steel trusses with wood and steel purlins covered with wood decking and asphalt shingles.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> "Final Construction Report, Rehabilitation of Lehigh Avenue Branch Library," City of Philadelphia, 1968, clippings file for library history located on site.

5. Porches, stoops: A series of three sets of terracing steps, rimmed by with low walls with metal fencing, lead from the sidewalk along Lehigh Avenue to the elevated front entry.

6. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: There is an entry pavilion to the center of the principle façade. Ionic columns support an ornate stepped frieze with the inscriptions "FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA" and above that, "LEHIGH AVE BRANCH." Above the frieze is a pediment ornamented with egg-and-dart, dentil, and acanthus leaf moldings with the date in Roman numerals with an acroterion at its apex. Flanking the pediment and resting atop the pilasters that ornament the frieze are Lion's head acroterion. The frontispiece includes a five-part, shouldered surround defined by bead molding with a lamb's tongue along the outer edge. To either side of the doors are sidelights with crossing mullions. The original double entry doors with a large transom light above were replaced by aluminum and glass doors as part of the renovations that occurred in 1967-68.

b. Windows and shutters: The typical window appears in a grouping of six fixed lights with crossing mullions arranged in a pattern of three across and two down. Each grouping is separated by plain pilasters. The windows are placed high on the façade to accommodate the books stacks on the interior. There are three windows to either side of the entry on the front façade, five to either side, and nine across the rear.

7. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The roof appears to be a low hipped roof, built to accept the skylight located to its center.

b. Cornice, eaves: The cornice is ornamented by egg-and-dart and lamb's tongue moldings, and there is a low parapet along the top.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The interior originally consisted of a single open space on the main floor that is now partitioned at one end to accommodate work spaces for staff and for special events. An elevator addition was erected to the center of the rear elevation. The basement was inaccessible (see "Original plans and construction" for a description of the planned layout).

2. Stairways: Originally, the only stairway to the basement from the main level was a narrow, enclosed spiral stair to the side of the front entry. A wider, single-run stair was added to one side of the main reading room to provide ease of access.

3. Flooring: The original maple flooring has been covered by a combination of vinyl tile and carpeting.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: The walls and ceilings are of plaster with decorative detailing. The walls have squared pilasters with ornate capitals, and there are fluted Ionic columns that flank the main entry. There is a complex cornice with dentil and egg-and-dart moldings. The ceiling is coffered along the outer edges with a large skylight to the center. The coffers appear with incised Greek fretwork, surrounding a series of inset panels with egg-and-dart molding with a flat panel to the center. The skylight extends most of the length of the room and is divided by coffered beams into sections with glass panels arranged in a pattern of nine-by-four lights. The skylights have been covered over from the outside so that natural light no longer flows through.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The principal entry is to the center of the front façade and has a shouldered frontispiece with a clock mounted in the entablature above. This entry is flanked by interior doorways that lead to the restroom and a spiral stairway. These too have a shoulder surround, with wood paneled doors with a transom above.

b. Windows: The windows are set above the book stacks that line the walls and are separated on the interior, as on the exterior, by pilasters.

8. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating: The library is heating via a central heating plant location on site. As was eventually done with all the Philadelphia branch libraries, the heat registers are located in the plinth below the built-in book stacks and just above the top shelf below the windows.

b. Lighting: The current electrical system, including wiring and light fixtures, was installed as part of the 1967-68 renovations. The lighting consists of brass chandeliers that hang at intervals, running lengthwise through the center of the reading room.

c. Plumbing: The plumbing system was also upgraded as part of the 1967-68 renovations, and new public and staff rest rooms were added.

D. Site:

1. Historic landscape design: The library fronts along a broad boulevard and sits high on its site with a wide, tiered flight of stairs leading from the sidewalk to the front entry, thus commanding a stately presence. The building historically was surrounded by lawn. The lot is currently surrounded by a metal fence, and the lawn has been landscaped with bushes and trees. The landscaping was undertaken in 1967-68 by Dekalb Nurseries, Incorporated.<sup>22</sup>

2. Outbuildings: There is a central heating plant to the northwest of the library.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural drawings:

“The Free Library of Philadelphia, Lehigh Avenue Branch, G.W. & W.D. Hewitt, Basement Plan, First Floor Plans, and Proposed Carnegie Library [architect’s perspective of south front and east side elevation]” ca. 1904, The Free Library of Philadelphia, Central Library, Clippings File for the Lehigh Branch.

B. Early views:

Free Library of Philadelphia, *Annual Report, 1906* (Municipal Reference Division, Cities P53-1154). Includes photographs taken upon completion of the library by William H. Rau, photographer. The two views include a perspective of the exterior south front and east side elevation (where the entry to the lecture hall was located), and an interior view taken from the northeastern corner of the room looking towards the front entry to show a general view of the interior space.

C. Bibliography:

1. Primary sources: The records of the Free Library of Philadelphia are located at the Central Library on Vine Street. The *Annual Reports* are located in the Municipal Reference Division, Cities P53-1154; and the Carnegie Fund Committee Minute Books are located in the Director’s Vault (access by special permission).

Free Library of Philadelphia, *Annual Report, 1905-1906*.

Ibid. *Carnegie Fund Committee Minutes, 1904-1906*.

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<sup>22</sup> “Final Construction Report, Rehabilitation of Library.”

Ibid. *Ninth Annual Report of the Library Board to the Mayor et al*, April 1905.

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#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of the Lehigh Branch Library was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the Heritage Documentation Programs of the National Park Service, Richard O'Connor, Chief during summer 2007 as part of a larger initiative to record the Carnegie Funded branch libraries of the Free Library of Philadelphia. The project is sponsored by HABS in cooperation with the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, John A. Gallery, director; and the Free Library of Philadelphia, William J. Fleming, Administrative

Services Director, and made possible through a Congressional appropriation for recording in Southeastern Pennsylvania. The historical reports were prepared by Lisa P. Davidson and Catherine C. Lavoie. Large-format photography was undertaken for HABS by Joseph Elliott. Measured drawings were prepared of the Thomas Holme Branch as the typical branch library during the summer 2008. The drawings team was led by Robert Arzola, working with Jason McNatt, Paul Davidson, and Ann Kidd, architectural technicians.